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Grief, Trauma & Deliverance

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Esther 4:14 will inspect the need for impactful Christian resources for grief and trauma counseling in today's society, making reference to various roots of grief, and not just the societal notion that grief is only related to the physical death of a loved one, but encompasses any significant loss that is impactful to someone's life.

Grief is defined as a "natural reaction to loss" (Temiz, 2025), or "a common response to loss that includes a spectrum of emotional, behavioral, and physical symptoms that can include robust psychological responses such as fear, anger, and shock" (Temiz, 2025). A loss can include divorce, loss of a job, a long-term illness or relocation whether that means moving homes or moving away from church/school and losing that connection with the friends/family. Moving away from church or school can lead to the loss of close relationships.

Trauma is defined as "a negative emotional response where the response contains cognitive, affective, and physiological elements" (Blehm, 2025) and "in cases of trauma, there appears to be a disruption between some of one's cognitive faculties and one's affective and physiological response" (Blehm, 2025). It is not only a psychological response but also a physiological response to an overwhelming event that surpasses one's coping abilities (Juby & Ryder, 2025). It can be triggered by a one-time single event or accumulative experiences which can impact a person's daily life as well as their functioning capabilities.

Although grief and trauma are distinct, they can blend and have the potential to impact one's mental health and well-being (Neelam & Gasparini, 2025). If trauma is left untreated, and individuals do not receive the proper and necessary support or interventions, such as therapy, they may never learn how to process specific experiences in a healthy way, which can be a

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domino effect to addictions, isolation and even suicide ideation and death by suicide (SAMHSA, 2025).

Grief and trauma can both stem from childhood experiences. Research shows that bonds formed during childhood influence trust in relationships. These early attachments shape our capacity for intimacy, our fear of rejection, and the foundation of trust in future relationships; and how that foundation for trust and forming relationships falls on the caregiver of a young child. Furthermore, the 8 Stages of Development, a theory developed by Erik Erikson suggests that an individual's identity is developed throughout their lifespan with eight specific stages (Brennan, 2025) also coincides with the research of how trust is built at the beginning of life, yet can build or fade throughout various stages depending on whether there was a supportive role figure in the child's life or not.

Another form of trauma is post traumatic stress disorder commonly referred to as PTSD. This type of trauma is an emotional condition followed by a traumatic event especially if the event was connected to a serious bodily injury or death, and creates intense fear or horror (Emery, 2025). Although PTSD is commonly thought of being connected with military personnel, it can affect veterans and civilians.

"Coping with PTSD is challenging, and it doesn't just affect the mind -it can shape every part of daily living" (Cruz, 2025). PTSD has the potential to impact one's relationships, work, and physical health, it can leave one's body in a constant state of hypervigilance causing the individual to develop trust issues. (Cruz, 2025). The characteristics of PTSD include intrusive thoughts that can potentially disrupt daily living activities and can lead to anxiety and depression due to emotional withdrawal or misinterpreting others' intentions and becoming defensive (Cruz,

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2025). Those suffering with PTSD may have lower motivation making it difficult to complete tasks and daily functioning may feel overwhelming. One symptom includes nightmares related to the trauma, which can impair sleep affecting daily functioning (Cruz, 2025).

For individuals experiencing grief, trauma or PTSD, healing and coping mechanisms, that are available to help improve mental well-being can include cognitive behavioral therapy and deliverance.

Cognitive behavioral therapy is “a psychological treatment considered effective for a wide range of mental health problems including depression, substance use disorders and PTSD” including “that our thoughts, behaviors, and emotions are interconnected, such that change in one of these areas affects functioning in others” (Wright, et al., 2025). CBT treatment can include identifying and changing negative thoughts/behaviors that are related to the trauma. When CBT is used for PTSD it can “reduce the distress related to the traumatic event and improve emotional regulation and the ability to cope” (Wright, et al., 2025).

Deliverance is defined as “a deliverance from life under the domination of daemonic forces and our own flesh for a life of good works, with those have been delivered “walking” no longer in “trespasses and sins” but, rather, in the “good works that God prepared for us to walk in”. This represents the reversal and rehabilitation of our former “walk” in which we were responsive to a very different spirit” (DeSilva, 2023). This “is integral to experiencing the full salvation that is God’s purpose for us in Christ” (DeSilva, 2023). According to Paul’s writings in the Bible, it portrays his belief that the Holy Spirit plays “a significant role in God’s drama of setting things right with us, in us, and among us”, and that “deliverance is not only from sin’s penalty but also from sin’s power” (DeSilva, 2023).

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In addition, Christian spiritual disciplines, such as “prayer, meditation, fasting, solitude, service, confession, and worship” (McMinn, 1997), may contribute to emotional well-being; however, the limited availability of counselors and the demand for Christian, Bible-based mental health professionals represent an important public concern requiring attention.

Childhood Development and Trust

To determine appropriate counselling and support strategies, as well as to cultivate effective spiritual practices, it is essential to examine the underlying causes of grief and trauma. This research draws upon John Bowlby’s theory of Attachment and Loss, which posits that separation anxiety typically arises in response to perceived threats or risks of loss, whereas mourning commonly occurs following an actual loss (Bowlby, 1984). In that theory one may find it is regarding the bonding formed during childhood and that bond influences how one goes through intimacy, rejection or the fear of rejection, and our trust in relationships. It speculates that it falls on the caregiver of an early aged child to establish the foundation for trust and forming relationships, fulfilling the need of safety for the child.

Bowlby’s theory in relation to Erik Erikson’s theory of the 8 stages of development, teaches that it’s the beginning of life where trust can be built, and throughout the various stages of lives trust either builds or fades; how children grow to accomplish tasks on their own and whether or not have a supporting role figure in one’s life for encouragement can either help build the strength of intimacy or create isolation (Brennan, 2025).

Transformational Learning and Safe Spaces

Throughout childhood, trust and attachments are established (Brennan, 2025) and during the transition from childhood into adulthood is when an individual can find themselves facing

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mental struggles and challenges. According to author, Barner “transformational learning requires you to take your life off Autopilot” (Barner, 2017). Clearer thinking can be achieved by being mindful of our surroundings, staying focused, and having someone who provides a safe, nonjudgmental space.

The Bible tells us “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5 King James Version); “The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower” (Psalm 18:2); “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39). These few verses are examples of the Biblical teaching that God is a secure attachment with unwavering love, that believers are to depend on God, and within Christ is where the believer can feel safe and supported.

Grief and Its Variants

Throughout different stages of life, including childhood, adulthood, and times when individuals establish trusts and attachments or seek security, grief is a mental health challenge that can occur at any age. It is an experience encountered across various phases of life.

While grief is often linked to a loss or bereavement, it can also arise from situations such as divorce, changing schools or workplaces, or relocating. The process of grieving varies widely among individuals and is influenced by factors such as available support systems as well as spiritual beliefs (Wolfelt, 2025).

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However, “one of the greatest stresses in life is losing a loved one” (Azmat, 2025) and most all bereaved experience acute sadness that does go away with time however approximately 10% have prolonged grieving; Risk factors for prolonged grief disorder includes intense and chronic sadness as well as social isolation, along with anxiety, depression and feelings of emptiness and detachment, creating an emotional numbing. (Azmat, 2025). Bowlby discusses mourning lasting over six months in mentally healthy adults, and how healthy mourning may include anger and denial. (Bowlby, 1984).

PTSD: Clinical and Biblical Perspectives

- Throughout the human development process there have been ones who have experienced such misguided trust, prolonged grief or trauma that they may be diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, commonly known as PTSD. It's first component is the fact that “some external trauma has overwhelmed a person's capacity to cope with the experience” (Horwitz, 2018, p. 4).

PTSD may have been commonly thought of being connected with military personnel, but it can affect veterans and civilians, although veterans may be at a higher risk for being diagnosed. The characteristics include intrusive thoughts, that can potentially disrupt daily living activities (Cruz, 2025). With the correct diagnosis and an enhanced treatment plan, including counseling and cognitive behavioral therapy, those patients can learn how to manage their lifestyle and regain some peace of mind. However, a great societal concern is the proper resources for such therapy and counseling (Conroy et al., 2020).

While PTSD is a modern clinical diagnosis, scriptural accounts reflect many of the emotional struggles after a trauma for ones in the Bible. Psalms tells of David's trauma with battles, oppression of the wicked and their hatred for him, terrors of death, how he had such fear

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and trembled because of it, yet he relied on God through all his trials (Psalms 55, King James Version).

Numerous “biblical scholars have begun to reread certain writings in the Hebrew Bible through the concepts of post-traumatic stress disorder and post-traumatic growth” (Li, 2023) by examining “Jacob’s provisional diagnosis with chronic PTSD following the apparent death of Joseph, which Birnbaum sees the earliest documented case of PTSD in history” (Li, 2023).

Scriptures regarding Jacob’s mental status can be found in Genesis 27:41, Genesis 32, Genesis 37 and Genesis 42.

• Even Christ’s crucifixion was a traumatic event, however, “If it is true that posttraumatic stress requires a physical organism to explain its effects on an individual, and if we have no reason to suspect this would be different for a divine person than a human person, then it is reasonable to interpret God’s relation to trauma in a manner that is more similar than not to the way this is normally experienced by humans in the real world. This has significant consequences for how we articulate God’s relation to human trauma in embodied terms” (Hill, 2023).

“The World Mental Health Surveys reported that approximately 70% of respondents experience a lifetime traumatic life event, and around 75% have suffered multiple potentially traumatic stressors” (Wright, 2025) and they recognize that PTSD occurs in more of the high-risk populations who have an increased exposure to traumatic events, such as military veterans, first responders/rescue workers and communities who have increased violence and/or inadequate resources for mental health care (Wright, 2025).

When trauma is prevalent in childhood the effects can be detrimental to the child’s function and “without effective treatment, intervention, symptoms of childhood trauma can

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worsen over time, and adverse effects can continue into adulthood. Individuals with untreated trauma symptoms are more likely to develop heart disease, depression, suicidality, cancer, and ischemic heart disease” (Koreenchuk, 2024).

Spiritual Healing and Soul Injuries

One source of therapy in helping reduce PTSD symptoms is trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT), where clients adopt skills to regulate emotional and behavioral responses, and includes the parent/caregiver, although this is not just for children, it has primarily been used for children and adolescents but has been applied with adults also. (Koreenchuk, 2024). This dual perspective, clinical and spiritual, allows for a more holistic understanding of trauma, especially in cases where emotional distress may stem from spiritual unrest.

Trauma is an open wound (Hill, 2023); as well, the Greek definition of trauma is wound (Strong’s 5134 - wound). Scriptures tell us that “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; But a wounded spirit who can bear?” (Proverbs 18:14, King James Version). “A soul injury is defined as a wound that separates a person from their real self, caused by unmourned loss and hurt, unforgiven guilt and shame, and fear of helplessness or loss of control” (Grassman, 2024); “The term soul wounds is gaining momentum in military psychology to index spiritual distress from traumatic experiences in combat” (Knobloch et al., 2022).

Therapeutic Intervention and Christian Counseling

Beyond psychological symptoms, trauma can manifest in ways that some interpret as spiritual affliction, prompting exploration into concepts like soul wounds and demonic oppression.

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Intervention resources include Christian author, Andrew Wommack's book titled, *Spirit, Soul and Body*, where he defines through God's word that humans are three-part, spirit, soul and body (Wommack, 2010, p.1). He states that "what's in your spirit must flow through your soul in order to get out to your body and the physical world around it"(Wommack, 2010, p.10), it is this belief that the physical body can be affected by the spirit, thus why many have a physical illness that stemmed from their spirit, which correlates with Korenchuk's statement of untreated trauma symptoms develop physical ailments (Korenchuk, 2024), but "when your soul agrees with your spirit, the life of God in you will manifest itself in your physical body. You'll experience healing, deliverance, anointing, victory, power, joy, prosperity-on and on it goes" (Wommack, 2010, p.14), so even though one can still experience depression and bitterness while walking with God, it's through healing and deliverance that one can be set free of such feelings.

While PTSD is often addressed through clinical interventions, many individuals, particularly within faith communities, also seek spiritual explanations and healing for their suffering. "Pastoral care and mental health practitioners are becoming increasingly aware of the phenomenon of spirit possession by an evil entity, commonly referred to as demonic possession. This spiritual affliction manifests with disturbing, painful, physical, and psychological signs and symptoms" (Illueca, 2018) and the "ultimate spiritual complication of a variety of triggering factors related to previous lifestyle, occult practices, or a history of trauma" (Illueca, 2018). It is believed that "Lived trauma left unaddressed can become compounded and have lasting impacts on individuals and generations" (Fraser, 2024) and "studies have shown that healing from the impact of any form of trauma is a viable path to a resilient life" (Fraser, 2024).

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Scripture states that “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds” (Psalms 147:3, New International Version); “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; But a wounded spirit who can bear?” (Proverbs 18:14) this scripture reveals the weight of having a wounded spirit, but the promise of restoration and healing tells us “For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 30:17). The Bible teaches that it is God’s will to be stable minded in all thoughts and actions (James 1:2-7) and that it is Christ who “restoreth my soul” (Psalm 23:3).

“The image of God also has moral implications. Created in the image of God, humans in the beginning, like God, were untainted by sin. They were entrusted with moral character and the capacity to make moral choices and exercise free will, a process that lends to uninterrupted physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wholeness. The entrance of sin (Genesis 3) disturbed the expression of God’s image in individuals. The immediate effect of sin tarnished the trusting relationship between God and humanity and with one another. It is true that the foundation of any healthy, loving relationship is built on trust and transparency.

However, sin tampered with this foundation, erecting fear, mistrust, and blame on a framework of lies. Because of sin, the relationship between God and humanity was marred by mistrust that led to disobedience that further contributed to fear and hiding (Gen 3:1–6, 8). At the same time, mankind’s relationship with one another was marked by blame, suspicion, and contempt of each other (vs. 9–13). These effects of sin evoke traumatic outcomes on individuals’ existential reality and have since been passed on from generation to generation” (Fraser, 2024).

Getting to the basics of the Bible and God’s word is where one can find healing, however, it takes counselors who are willing to study the Word for direction and learn how to

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apply scriptures to grief and traumas, beginning with recognizing and acknowledging that the trauma exists (Fraser, 2024), and then forgiveness for “Without emotional and spiritual healing, the physical body is also affected” (Fraser, 2024).

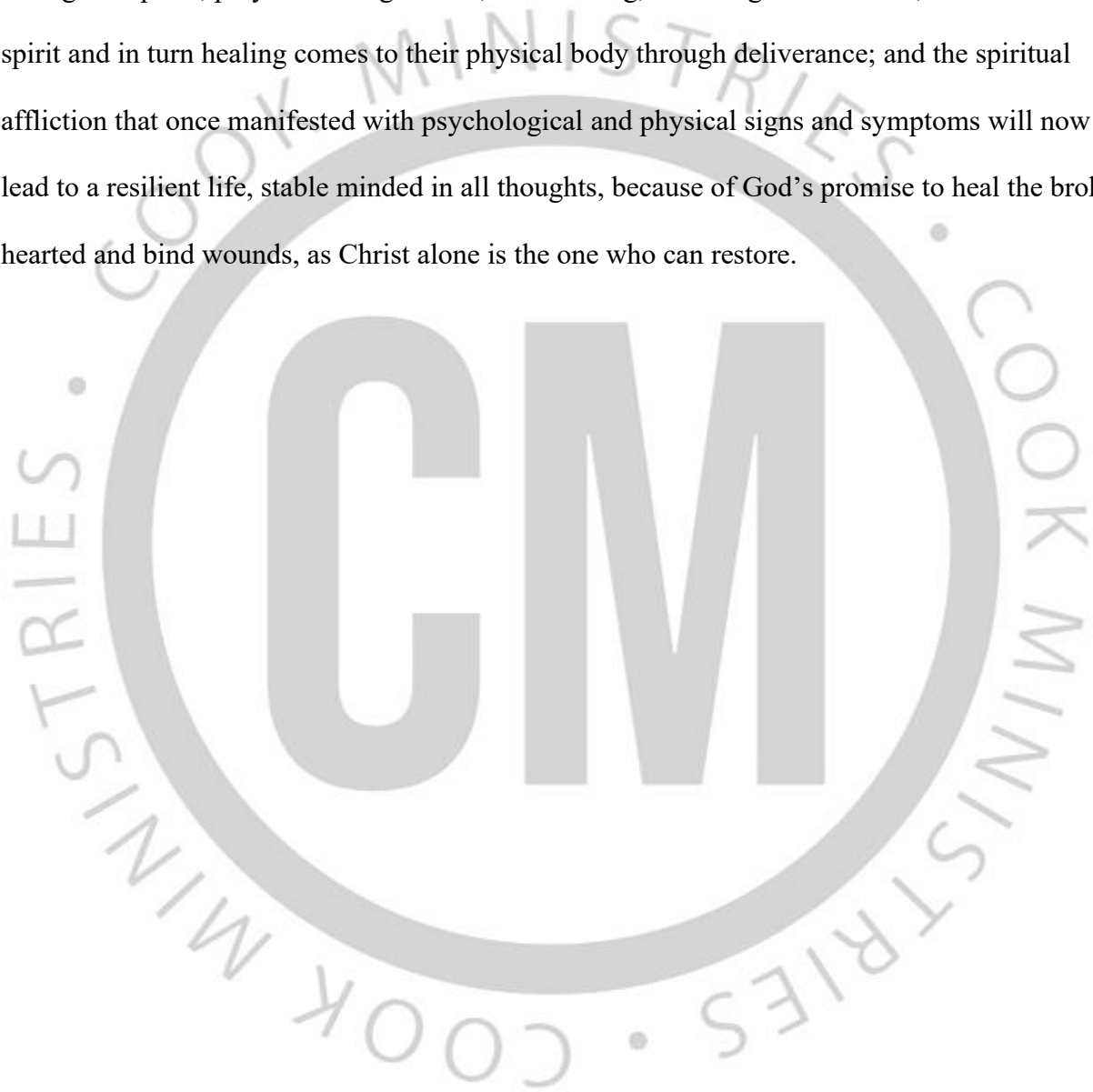
In conclusion this Capstone Project has inspected the need for impactful Christian resources for grief and trauma counseling. Defining grief, trauma and PTSD, and how they are distinct yet can be blended, and whether singular or blended each are impactful to one’s mental health and well being and when left untreated an individual may never learn how to process experiences in a healthy way, and undealt with could lead to addictions, isolation and suicide ideations/attempts, and one could begin developing physical sickness due to emotional stress factors.

Bowlby’s attachment theory teaches that as a young child the foundation of trust can be built fulfilling the need of safety for the child or that bond can be broken at an early age, which in turn leaves the young child seeking fulfillment. In Erikson’s 8 Stages of Development, he agrees that the beginning of life is where trust can be built. Yet it is in scriptures that teaches to find that God is a secure attachment with unconditional love and believers are to depend on God and that is where believers can feel safe. Grief is a universal experience regardless of age and grieving varies per person and is influenced by availability of support systems as well as spiritual beliefs. Trauma and PTSD both have characteristics that disrupt activities of daily life, and it is proven the high number of individuals who have experienced a traumatic life event or stressor.

Through counseling, such as trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy or cognitive behavioral therapy, clients can learn to regulate emotional and behavioral responses. Access to professional counselors trained in these methods may help clients address psychological and

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emotional challenges, potentially leading to improved mental resilience and stability and with access to proper Christian counselors who can help clients understand the fullness of God through scripture, prayer and forgiveness; then healing, including soul wounds, comes to one's spirit and in turn healing comes to their physical body through deliverance; and the spiritual affliction that once manifested with psychological and physical signs and symptoms will now lead to a resilient life, stable minded in all thoughts, because of God's promise to heal the broken hearted and bind wounds, as Christ alone is the one who can restore.



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